

REMARKS

Applicants' request favorable reconsideration in light of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 1-13 are pending in the application, with claim 1 being independent. By this amendment, claims 1-7, 9, 10, 12, and 13 have been amended to more clearly define features of the invention, and to improve their form. No new matter has been added.

The Office Action objected to Figures 9 and 10 for failing to include a legend such as --PRIOR ART--. Replacement sheets containing Figures 9 and 10, amended to include such legend, are enclosed. Favorable consideration of these replacement drawings is requested.

The Office Action also objected to claims 1 and 7 because of informalities. The foregoing amendments are believed to obviate these objections. Favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of the objections to claims 1 and 7 are requested.

Regarding art rejections, claims 1-6 and 8-13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,002,900 to Ishiyama in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,128,456 to Chigono et al. In addition, claim 7 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as unpatentable over Ishiyama in view of Chigono et al., and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,366,751 to Shakuto et al. Applicants traverse these rejections.

As now recited in independent claim 1, an image forming apparatus includes an image bearing member, a charging member, and a developer carrying member. The charging member charges the image bearing member and bears electrically conductive particles that contact the image bearing member. The developer carrying member carries a developer provided with toner and electrically conductive particles. Also, the developer carrying member is applied

a voltage to develop an electrostatic image formed on the image bearing member with the developer and is capable of collecting a residual developer on the image bearing member. The developer carrying member opposes the image bearing member with a gap of from 150 μm to 250 μm therebetween, so as to enable the electrically conductive particles to fly from the developer carrying member to the image bearing member.

Applicants submit that many of these features are not taught or suggested by the cited art, whether that art is taken alone or in combination.

Ishiyama relates to an image forming method, image forming apparatus and process cartridge. In one embodiment of that patent, a development sleeve and a photosensitive drum of a magnetic brush-type developing apparatus are arranged to have a gap of from 100 μm to 1000 μm therebetween. This gap size is stated to prevent carrier sticking and to improve dot reproducibility. However, the Examiner recognizes that Ishiyama does not teach or suggest a developer provided with toner and electrically conductive particles. Moreover, Applicants submit that Ishiyama does not teach or suggest that the developer carrying member opposes the image bearing member with a gap of from 150 μm to 250 μm therebetween, so as to enable the electrically conductive particles to fly from the developer carrying member to the image bearing member. Accordingly, Ishiyama fails to teach or suggest features of the present invention.

Chigono et al. relates to an image forming apparatus having a charging member applying an electric charge through electrically conductive or electroconductive particles to the surface of a photosensitive or image bearing member. Chigono et al. is understood to be cited for teaching a developing apparatus bearing electrically conductive particles and for teaching developer provided with the electrically conductive particles. Although there is discussion of a

developer having electrically conductive particles, there is no motivation or suggestion in either patent to use such a developer in the system of Ishiyama. Even if the developer having electrically conductive particles were used in the system of Ishiyama, there is no motivation or suggestion to further modify the apparatus by adjusting a gap size within a specific range such that the electrically conductive particles would fly from the carrying member to the image bearing member.

Shakuto et al. is understood to be cited for teaching features of a dependent claim. Shakuto et al. does not remedy the deficiencies noted above with respect to claim 1.

Thus, independent claim 1 is patentable over the citations of record.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the § 103 rejections are respectfully requested.

Claims 2-13 depend from claim 1. These dependent claims are believed allowable by virtue of their dependency, and for defining other patentable features of the invention. Individual and favorable reconsideration of the dependent claims are requested.

Applicants submit that the present application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the objections and rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action, and an early Notice of Allowability are requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. D. D.", is written over a horizontal line.

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